

Bleach baths for children with eczema

Why are bleach baths used?

Children with eczema are more prone to skin infections. Bleach baths reduce the number of bacteria on the skin. They may be recommended to treat children with infected eczema and children who have repeated skin infections.

Bleach baths are often used in combination with other eczema treatments to help with the itch and treat infection. These may include bath oils, emollients (moisturisers), topical corticosteroids, wet dressings and antibiotics.

How safe are bleach baths for children?

Bleach baths are very safe if used as directed. Research has shown that bleach baths can be used for young children without any side effects. The final concentration of bleach when diluted in water is similar to chlorinated swimming pool water. If your child experiences any irritation, stop using the bleach baths and discuss with the treating doctor or nurse practitioner.

What you will need:

- Unscented bleach (containing 4.2% sodium hypochlorite) eg White King bleach
- 10L bucket
- 12mL measure (20mL syringe or measuring cup) OR
- $\frac{1}{4}$ measuring cup depending on which of the recipes you choose to use
- Bath oil (1 capful of bath oil can be added if the skin feels very dry)
- Fresh clean towels

How to perform a bleach bath

1. Before you start, wash and dry your hands.
2. Add 12 mL of bleach (e.g. unscented White King bleach) to every 10L of water. Water should not be too warm.

Note: For most average sized bath tubs, adding 1 quarter of a cup of White King bleach to half a bath tub filled with water gives the correct dilution.

3. Add 1 capful of bath oil to bath water if the skin feels very dry.
4. While in the bath:
 - a. Wash the face and scalp
 - b. If crusts are on the skin gently soak them off in the bath
 - c. Your child can soak in the bath for up to 10 minutes
 - d. You do not have to rinse after bathing



5. Using a fresh towel pat the skin dry. Do not rub as this can irritate the skin and cause itch. Use fresh towels for every bath.
6. Apply plenty of moisturiser (emollient) to the whole body including the face immediately after getting out of the bath.
7. If a cortisone cream or ointment has been prescribed, apply it to all eczema areas, not just the worst areas, (as directed by the doctor or nurse practitioner) before applying the moisturiser everywhere else on the body. You can put the moisturiser on straight after applying the cortisone cream or ointment – there is no need to wait.

How often should you have a bleach bath?

Bleach baths are usually prescribed twice a week by the doctor or nurse practitioner.

Points to remember

- Measure the bleach accurately to achieve the right concentration to treat the infected eczema.
- Do not share towels with other family members.
- Wash towels and bedding in hot water regularly.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist if you are not sure about managing the eczema.



Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service

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